

Have your say on council savings proposals

Eastbourne Borough Council is facing exceptional financial challenges due to the high costs of homelessness and temporary accommodation. This has been compounded by high interest rates, reduction in business rates income and inflationary pressures.

Despite including over £3m of savings in the 2024/2025 budget, additional savings of over £2.7m are needed in the current financial year and a further £3m of savings for the following financial year.

The council is not alone in dealing with this emergency, with many authorities in recent weeks and months announcing that they are having to make severe cuts to services.

When considering the savings required, the following guidelines are being considered, where possible:

- Prioritising services that we have a statutory duty to deliver
- Prioritising services that provide directly for those most in need
- Seeking opportunities to make temporary reductions (temporary where possible)

Savings proposals for non-statutory services

We are seeking the views of residents, visitors, business, partner organisations and other stakeholders on proposals for further changes to non-statutory council services.

All of the following proposals have previously been adopted by other authorities across the country to reduce the expenditure of the council and increase financial resilience.

The proposals being considered:

- **Public toilets:** moving to a community toilet scheme.
- **Street cleansing:** focussing activity on areas with higher footfall.
- **Grounds maintenance:** focussing on core activities and seeking community support in other areas.
- **Customer services:** slightly reducing our face-to-face and telephone operating hours.
- **Car parks:** reviewing charges and hours of operation.
- **Sovereign Centre:** considering different options for the future of the centre, including rationalising the number of pools available, whilst protecting swimming lessons, school swimming and structure sessions such as lane swimming.
- **Community grants:** reducing our budget for grants to our voluntary sector partners (including Rent Support Grants) after April 2025.

- **Town Hall:** explore ways to reduce the costs and consider alternative uses for the building.
- **The splash pad at Princes Park:** identify options for future sponsorship for it to remain open.

The consultation will run from Thursday 19 September to Thursday 31 October 2024.

Paper copies of the consultation information will be available from Eastbourne Town Hall or can be posted on request.

To request the information in a different language or format, please email CustomerFirst@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

Survey questions

1. In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

- A local resident
- A business
- A visitor
- A voluntary, community or partner organisation

If you are responding as a businesses or other organisations, please tell us which one (free text).

Where “you” are referred to in this response, this will be deemed to mean the organisation or group you represent.

2. **Public toilets:** moving to a community toilet scheme

We understand the importance of public toilets across the town, both to residents and tourists.

Last year, the cost of providing public toilets was over £300,000, and this cost increases each year. Many council-owned public toilets are old and expensive to maintain.

We are proposing moving to a community toilet scheme. This would involve identifying toilets available for public use across Eastbourne and closing most council-owned public toilets.

All Changing Places toilets would remain open, as would the public toilets at the bandstand.

Community toilet schemes have been put in place in other parts of the UK and have proven to work well and improve the range and quality of toilets available for public use.

What impact would moving to a community toilet scheme have on you?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Little or no impact
- Don't know

Please give the reasons for this (free text):

If you are involved with a business or community group and would be interested in being part of a community toilet scheme, please enter its name, location and an email address below (free text).

If you have any ideas or suggestions for alternative ways for toilets to be provided for public use, please tell us below:

3. Street cleansing: focussing activity on areas with higher footfall

The council is committed to the high standard of street cleanliness across the town. Under this proposal, we would focus our activity on the town centre and seafront which are high footfall areas. We would in-turn reduce street cleansing in other parts of the borough.

We will continue to offer street cleansing on request in other areas when needed.

What impact would these changes have on you?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Little or no impact
- Don't know

Please give the reasons for this (free text):

If you have any ideas or suggestions for how the council could reduce the costs of its street cleansing, please tell us below (free text):

4. Grounds maintenance: focussing on core activities and seeking community support in other areas.

Providing a grounds maintenance service is complex and expensive. Annually, we receive a number of complaints from residents and visitors about the grounds maintenance service provided. As such, we will review this discretionary service with a view to reduce costs while delivering a targeted service enhancement.

The review will focus on providing core services, including:

- Maintaining prioritised spaces and areas across the town
- Ensuring a safe environment for residents and visitors
- Promoting biodiversity

We will also work with community groups to explore jointly prioritised plans for key locations across the town.

What impact would these changes have on you?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Little or no impact
- Don't know

Please give the reasons for this (free text):

If you have any ideas or suggestions for how the council could reduce the costs of grounds maintenance, please tell us below (free text):

5. Customer services: slightly reducing our face-to-face and telephone operating hours.

Many of the council's services are now available to access via our website and there have been significant upgrades to the council's systems.

We are looking at reducing our customer service team's face-to-face and telephone operating hours during quieter times.

Many other councils have reduced their opening times without significantly impacting customers.

Our customer service team's current operating hours are Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Our revised operating hours would be:

- Telephone: 9am to 4pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday (10am to 4pm on Wednesday)
- Face-to-face: 10am to 2pm, Monday to Friday.

We will also explore ways to improve our online services to provide 24/7 access to a wider range of services.

What impact would these changes have on you?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Little or no impact
- Don't know

Please give the reasons for this (free text):

If you have any ideas or suggestions for how the council could reduce the costs of its customer services or to improve its online services, please tell us below: (free text)

6. Car parks: reviewing charges and hours of operation.

We have not increased parking charges at council-owned car parks for the last eight years. Under this proposal, we would look to bring charges in-line with other local car parks.

We are also looking at extending the hours of operation. These are currently 8am to 6pm. We are considering increasing this to 8am to 8pm (10pm at College Road, Hyde Gardens and Wish Tower car parks).

What impact would these changes have on you?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Little or no impact
- Don't know

Please give the reasons for this (free text):

If you have any ideas or suggestions for how the council could increase income from its car parks, please tell us below: (free text)

7. Sovereign Centre: considering different options for the future of the centre, including rationalising the number of pools available, whilst protecting swimming lessons, school swimming and structure sessions such as lane swimming.

Most leisure centres operate a single swimming pool. The Sovereign Centre currently has four separate pools. The age of the centre means that significant investment is required in key aspects of the infrastructure. For example, the plant and equipment supporting the fun pool is now end of life and requires replacement soon.

The centre as a whole is expensive to run, and in 24/25 the Sovereign Centre is projected to cost £424,000.

We are looking at options for the future of the centre, including reducing the number of pools available, whilst protecting swim lessons, school swimming, and structured sessions such as lane swimming.

We intend to transfer the centre to Wave Active in 2025.

We are considering closing the fun pool and diving pool, and exploring different uses for these such as soft play, a climbing wall or greater gym capacity.

What impact would these changes have on you?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Little or no impact
- Don't know

Please give the reasons for this (free text):

If you have any ideas or suggestions for how the council could reduce the costs of running the Sovereign Centre, while safeguarding its long-term use, please tell us below: (free text)

8. Community Grants: reducing our budget for grants to our voluntary sector partners (including Rent Support Grants).

The council currently provides grant funding for a number of voluntary and community organisations. This includes through Rent Support Grants for groups that operate out of council-owned buildings.

We are looking at reducing the overall amount of grant funding we offer to our voluntary sector partners, with 100% Rent Support Grant remaining in place for community centres. Any changes would not come into effect before April 2025.

What impact would these changes have on you?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Little or no impact
- Don't know

Please give the reasons for this (free text):

If you have any ideas or suggestions for alternative ways to reduce budgets for voluntary sector partners, please tell us below:

9. Town Hall: explore ways to reduce the costs and consider alternative uses for the building.

With its rich history and deep connection to local public life, the Town Hall is an important symbol of Eastbourne. At nearly 140 years old, the building is costly to operate and requires significant investment to maintain.

We are looking for ways to reduce the running costs and investment that would be needed over the coming years. This could include making the building available for other uses.

What impact would these changes have on you?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Little or no impact
- Don't know

Please give the reasons for this (free text):

If you have any ideas or suggestions for how the Town Hall could be used by different organisations or for different purposes in future, please tell us below: (free text)

10. Splash pad at Princes Park: identify options for future sponsorship for it to remain open.

The splash pad at Princes Park currently costs around £25,000 a year to run. To enable the splash pad to continue to operate, we would need to identify sponsorship funding from one or more outside organisations.

We are looking at sponsorship options to open the splash pad for 2025 onwards. If we aren't able to find sponsorship, we would need to close the splash pad.

What impact would these changes have on you?

- Positive impact
- Negative impact
- Little or no impact
- Don't know

Please give the reasons for this (free text):

If you or someone you know would be interested in sponsoring the splash pad at Princes Park, or if you have other ideas for funding the facility, please provide details below (free text).

If you have any ideas or suggestions for alternative ways to fund the Splash Pad, please tell us below:

11. Do you have any other comments to make about the savings being considered by Eastbourne Borough Council?

12. Questions about you (equality monitoring questions)